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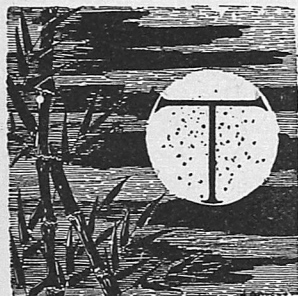
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

JAPANESE INTERIORS.—II.

BY LAURA B. STARR.



THE lack of windows in a Japanese house is a thing to which the American or European can never become quite accustomed. During pleasant weather when the sliding screens are removed from two or three sides, leaving the entire house open to the influence of air and sunlight, one gets along very well, but even this condition has its drawbacks, for the strong light is very harmful to the eyes. There is no way of shading the eyes and subduing the light,

except by putting in the shoji, which immediately darkens the room too much for work.

The Japanese house is not altogether without windows, though; there are certain openings in some of the permanent partitions which may be regarded as windows, but while they allow a modicum of light and air to enter the room, they really are only ornamental bits of bamboo or woodwork,

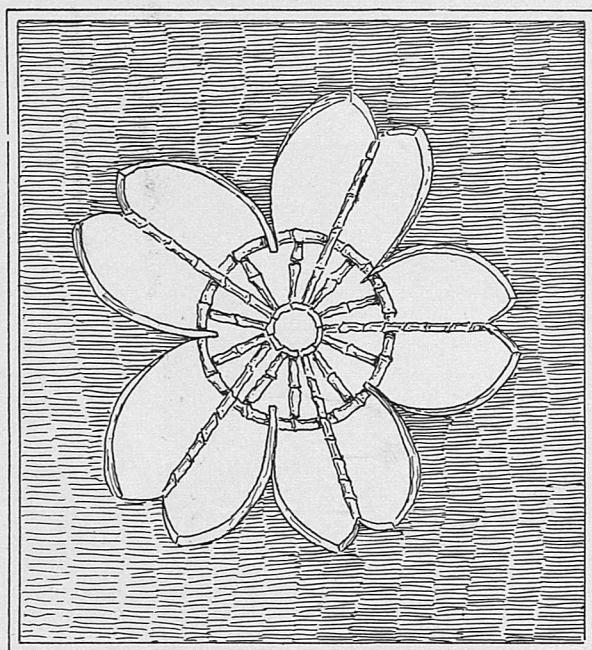


FIG. 1. WINDOW OF CHERRY AND BAMBOO FOR YADOYO.

filling the window space, and which the Japanese carpenter delights to put in the most unexpected places.

The shoji is the outside screen, which in reality takes the place of our windows; these are always along the veranda, or come on that side of the room towards the exterior wall of the house. The shoji is made of light bars of wood crossing each other at right angles, like our old-fashioned small window panes; in ordinary houses the shoji is covered with oiled paper, but in those of more pretension, they are often of geometric figures, mountains, rivers and groves of bamboo trees. Some of the shojis are marvelously beautiful, not from intricate or elaborate design, but from their very simplicity. When these are closed the room is flooded with a soft light that is very agreeable, if one does not need to use the eyes. The lower portion of the shoji to the height of a foot or so from the floor is usually a wood panel as a protection against careless feet, as well as to give strength to the frame.

The very frail way in which these movable partitions are made, and the excellent repair in which they are kept, for one seldom sees a ragged and tattered shoji, shows what a careful people the Japanese are. Their slow movements—for, though there is in the language a word for hurry—*hayaku*—they never do hurry, and stockinged feet prevent the breaking and marring of the slender frames and polished woodwork. I have often wondered what would be left of a Japanese house after a month's occupancy by a family of American children.

When windows occur between two rooms, they do not always have the shoji; but there is always a lattice of bamboo or other material wrought in some artistic design, of which they have almost as many as they have windows, for a new one is nearly always made for each window. The apertures are square, round, oblong, crescent, or fan-shaped, with designs made to fit each separate one.

In olden times the feeling of caste was so strong that certain shapes and designs were used in each grade of society, and were never adopted by those above or below, however much they might be admired. The windows in *Yadoyas*, inns, and tea houses differed very materially from those in the gentleman's house, and his designs were never used by the daimio or samurai. By edict of the emperor, many of the old customs are abolished, but generations will have passed away before the line of demarcation will have become extinct in the hearts of the people, for, although they have been called a "nation of imitators," they are very conservative with regard to many of their old habits and customs, and retain them, while adopting new ones.

In walking along the veranda, which leads to the lavatory in all *Yadoyas*, one is sure to find curious little windows of most artistic design; the most common form is made of waving lines of bamboo, held in place by curved lines of strong wire woven in and out.

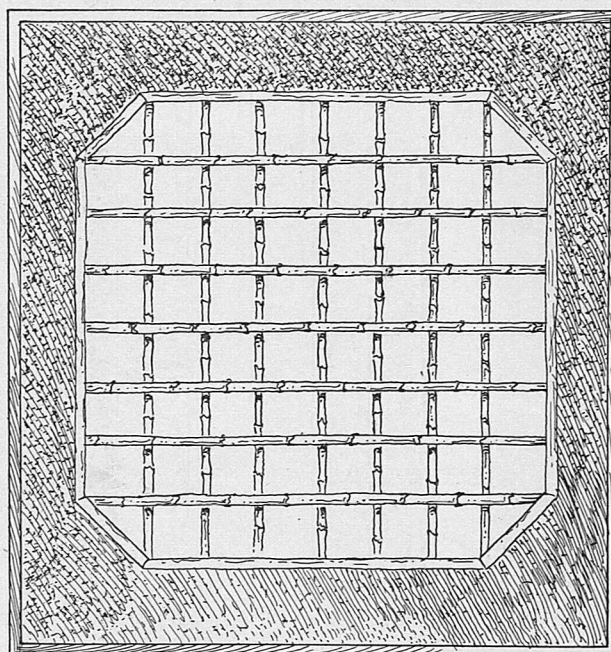


FIG. 2. WINDOW DESIGN FOR A GENTLEMAN'S HOUSE.

Many Japanese houses, and nearly all inns, consist of several buildings, united by a covered way leading from one to another. Along this walk are numerous windows, wherein the carpenter has displayed much ingenuity and taste. One of the prettiest I have seen was in a tea house in Nara, the ancient capital of Japan; within a circular opening had been placed a gnarled branch of pine, so cut and arranged as to fit perfectly; the bark had been removed and the surface highly polished, giving it a beautiful color. One who has not seen the unpainted, unvarnished wood of Japanese houses can scarcely realize the beauty of grain and color. Another window was filled with bamboo work like design No. 1, simple but extremely pretty.

A window was covered with fine squares of bamboo like No. 2. Another window was circular, five feet in diameter; pieces of dark brown bamboo were secured across this opening, forming the frame work like design No. 4. A close grating of brown rush, running vertically, was placed over this.

In the cities, a narrow strip of window glass may be seen inserted across the shoji about two feet from the floor; one's feeling of surprise passes away when it is remembered that the natives sit on the floor, and this window comes within their line of vision.

Windows seldom occur in the second story, but when they do they always overlook the garden, which is always beautiful to look upon; sometimes the lower part consists of panels of

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light and dark wood, with bars of bamboo geometrically arranged above.

Morse tells of an old house in Nagoya, in which was a partition of dark cedar, in the center of this was a circular window five feet in diameter, occupied by a panel of thin cedar, in which was a perforated design of waves. The curious, formal, curled tongues of water, like young sprouting ferns, the long graceful sweep of the waves, and the circular drops suspended above the breaking crests presented a charming effect, as the light coming through from the outside illuminated these openings.

DECORATIVE NOTES.

TABLES belonging to the Louis Quatorze and Louis Quinze periods display the utmost variety of form, and the extent to which the curvilinear element is developed in them is something remarkable. Taking French furniture as a whole, we must admit that if there is one thing more than another in which the French furnishers excel, it is in the production of seats combining the maximum of grace with the greatest possible amount of comfort. While other nations exhibit their solidity in massive conventional furniture, the French have evi-

workmanship are absolutely necessary in such furniture as we refer to. The designer must avoid the wholesale production of meretricious ornament, with which the most costly pieces are overwhelmed. An original sideboard scheme, while avoiding any violent departure from ordinary lines, in order that it may possess a practical value as an easily manufactured and salable article of domestic furniture, and at the same time provides accommodation for the reception of the accessories associated with the functions of the dining room in the most original manner. It is a feasible and economic adaptation of the simpler characteristics of the Renaissance style, but contains nothing in detail involving the employment of expensive or extra skilled labor. The element of enrichment is sparingly introduced, being made subordinate to the more important features of the style and character of the woodwork generally.

A FINE line of inexpensive bedroom furniture is displayed in a New York Store. The English practice of staining and enamelling their bedroom furniture in different colors has not yet been adopted in this country to any extent, but we think that furniture of this kind is vastly improved by the use of color. Green stained wood furniture is just now enjoying a certain amount of fashionable popularity, and the use of this

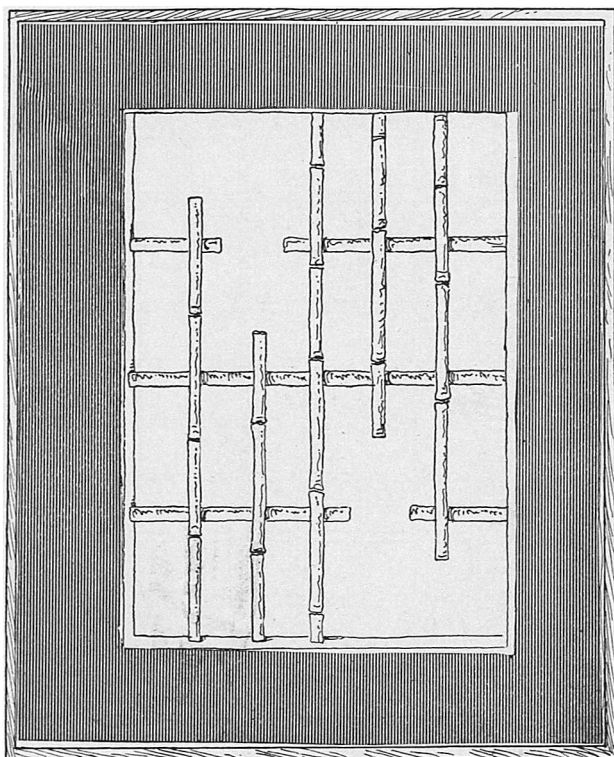


FIG. 3. SIMPLE BAMBOO WINDOW.

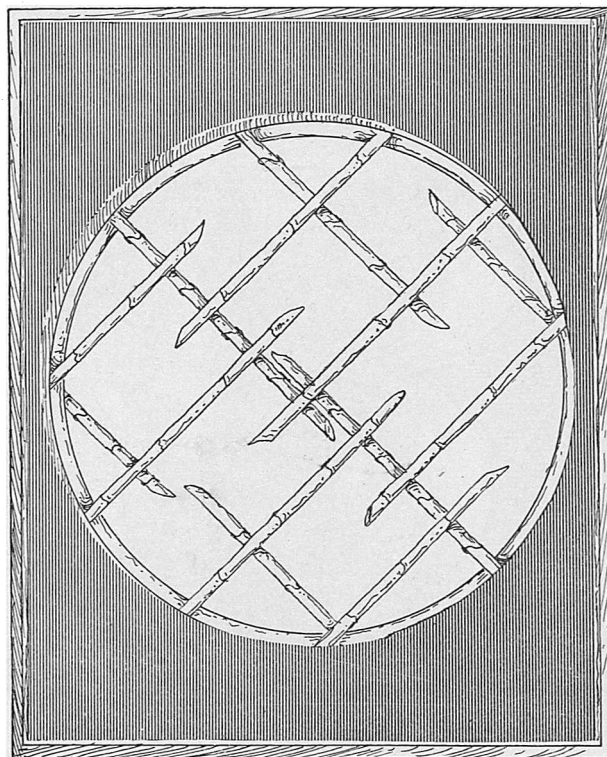


FIG. 4. WINDOW FOR A MERCHANTS' HOUSE.

denced their national love of ease and grace by the production of a variety of forms which have never been rivalled for chairs of refined beauty and ease. The Louis Seize is the style *par excellence*, and it will be difficult to find anything to supersede the delicate little armchairs, sofas and side chairs, produced in this style. The curves are graceful and delicate, and the charm of the whole is greatly heightened by the beautiful tapestry with which it is covered.

THERE are two kinds of furniture at present in the market, both of which seem to us equally bad when looked at from a standpoint of the requirements of the masses. The one style is elaborate, ornate and fanciful in treatment, and very costly, and the other consists of tawdry, badly made and still more badly finished cheap furniture. Between these two extremes there is a field wherein a great variation in arrangement of form and ornament may exist in economic furniture in the prevailing styles. While the demands of utility are to a certain extent restrictive, yet the demands for such furniture need not always be based upon the usual stereotyped lines. As long as a piece of furniture comes well within the prescribed limits of utility, it may be interrupted or broken up in any manner that will give artistic results. Simplicity of design and excellence of

stain admits of many quaint eccentricities in design, which would hardly be deemed suitable for production in polished hardwood. This bedroom furniture is also decorated with variously colored silk panels, such as in the case of dressing tables, the color of the silk being in harmonious contrast to the color of the woodwork. For green woodwork, terra cotta, or old gold, color silk or plush makes a highly decorative and effective medium.

In fancy oddments for the drawing room, the furniture stores exhibit a most extensive and varied line of goods. The demand for suitable furniture created by the institution of the 5 o'clock tea has resulted in the introduction of innumerable pretty and tasteful forms in fancy tables. There are wall brackets designed for the reception of music portfolios, which are useful and effective accessories to the music cabinet. There are half a dozen original ideas for bric-a-brac, capitals, etc., etc.

THE latest designs in wardrobes make that useful article not only a receptacle for clothes, but also a cabinet. This dual obligation is a necessity of the age, and the designer will be clever if he takes care not to make the wardrobe as fanciful in appearance as it is combatable in its utility.